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STATE FOR EUR/SCE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: EUR/SCE DIRECTOR HOH'S MEETINGS WITH  
GOM OFFICIALS AND OPPOSITION

REF: SKOPJE 980

Classified By: P/E LATHAM, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

Summary

1. (C) Summary. In his October 17 meetings with GOM officials and opposition party leaders, EUR/SCE Director Chris Hoh noted the need for improved inter-ethnic dialogue and continued implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, a vigorous and non-partisan fight against crime and corruption, support for the Kosovo final status process, and continued progress on NATO-related reforms. GOM officials assured Hoh that they would continue to reach out to the opposition parties, especially eAlbanian party DUI, pursue corruption cases in a non-partisan manner, support border demarcation with Kosovo as a technical issue, and continue the defense and political reforms necessary for NATO membership. DUI President Ali Ahmeti complained that the GOM had not reciprocated DUI's attempts to reach compromise on the current political impasse. End Summary.

Meetings

2. (U) EUR/SCE Director Hoh met separately with:  
- NATO Coordinator and former Ambassador to the US Nikola Dimitrov  
- Minister of Finance and VMRO-DPMNE Vice President Trajko Slaveski;  
- Deputy Prime Minister for Euro Integration and Foreign Aid Gabriela Konevska-Trajkovska;  
- Deputy Prime Minister for Framework Agreement Implementation and Minister of Healthm Imer Selmani;  
- Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, National Coordinator for NATO Membership;  
- MFA State Secretary Igor Ilievski, MFA State Counselor Milan Spirodonovski, and Head of Sector Pascal Stojceski;  
- Presidential National Security Advisor Stevo Pendarovski;  
- DUI President Ali Ahmeti, and DUI Vice President Musa Xhaferi; and  
- SDSM (eMacedonian opposition party) lame duck President (reftel), and former PM Vlado Buckovski, and SDSM MP and former FM Ilinka Mitreva

## Inter-Ethnic Relations

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¶3. (C) In his meetings with GOM officials, Hoh pointed out that Macedonia was a regional success story of inter-ethnic cooperation. The current government should work to build on that success by creating open lines of communication with DUI leaders, he said. In addition to being important for Macedonia's future, maintaining a respectful and substantive dialogue with DUI was smart politics; it would help with successful implementation of key laws. All GOM interlocutors agreed. They said they were willing to hold talks with DUI's leaders, but pointed out that this was DUI's first time in opposition and its leaders had not yet learned how to be a constructive opposition party.

¶4. (C) Hoh told Deputy PM Selmani, a leader of the eAlbanian coalition member DPA, that the burden was on the GOM to show that it could manage its responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner; combatting corruption should be non-partisan. In addition, DPA needed to demonstrate that it could represent the interests of all ethnic Albanians in Macedonia and not engage in partisan attacks on DUI. Selmani pledged that the GOM would focus on doing its job and not engage in politically motivated actions against DUI. For example, the GOM would continue to be careful in dealing evenhandedly with DUI-affiliated government employees. Selmani also said that, in his position as Deputy PM, he was committed to the continued implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This would include passage of the remaining needed legislation, implementation of legislation already passed, and ensuring successful implementation of decentralization and equal representation.

¶5. (C) DUI President Ahmeti reiterated his view that, by not bringing DUI into the government coalition, PM Gruevski had shown disrespect for the eAlbanian population and disenfranchised the majority of eAlbanian voters who had supported DUI in the July parliamentary elections. He told Hoh, however, that DUI had moderated its earlier opposition to the government, having returned to work in the parliament and having demonstrated willingness to open a dialogue with the GOM. The GOM, however, had not reciprocated with genuine efforts to reach compromises with DUI. Instead, the GOM, and in particular DPA, had removed or demoted civil servants who were affiliated with DUI, pursued changes to a draft police law for DPA's own benefit, and manipulated parliamentary procedures to block DUI's ability to weigh-in decisively on legislation. Hoh urged Ahmeti to remain patient and to continue pursuing DUI's interests through the democratic process and to avoid violence. Hoh said this strategy, along with DUI efforts to show the public its constructive attitude, offered the best chance for productive dialogue with the government. The USG would continue working on the government to be more responsible as well.

## Support for Kosovo Final Status Process

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¶6. (C) Hoh told his interlocutors that the USG appreciated Macedonia's support for the international effort to resolve Kosovo's final status. He said that Macedonia could continue to provide support to Kosovo through its example as a successful inter-ethnic state, and he hoped Macedonia would support Kosovo after final status was determined. He also said that resolution of the border demarcation between Macedonia and Kosovo would be part of the final status agreement, and should be treated by both sides as a technical, rather than political, issue. His interlocutors agreed that was the correct approach.

¶7. (C) MFA State Secretary Ilievski said that MFA officials were working on proposed language on border demarcation to be included in a Kosovo final status settlement. The draft language would specify in greater detail how the border demarcation issue should be resolved. FM Milososki likely would run that language by DAS DiCarlo during her October 22-25 visit, Ilievski said. Hoh later asked National Security Advisor Pendarovski if he thought Macedonia would

recognize an independent Kosovo if the Ahtissaari package was not agreed to by the Serbian government. Pendarovski said that, if that scenario occurred, the GOM would likely recognize Kosovo only after the EU, or a significant number of EU members, recognized its independence.

#### NATO Reforms and Fighting Corruption

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¶18. (C) Hoh told GOM officials the USG would continue to support Macedonia's efforts to implement the reforms necessary for NATO membership. Finance Minister Slaveski promised that the GOM would continue to allocate sufficient money to the MOD for NATO-related reforms. Hoh said that, in addition to the defense reforms, NATO also would be reviewing Macedonia's progress on key political and judicial reform matters. One critical issue would be progress on the GOM's efforts to fight organized crime and corruption. He said the GOM should, in addition to passing and implementing anti-corruption legislation, prosecute high-profile corruption cases that would demonstrate its commitment to pursuing corruption at the highest levels. Hoh noted, however, that such cases needed to be pursued in a non-partisan manner. Targeting only members of the political opposition would undermine the credibility of the GOM's efforts. In addition, Hoh noted, the GOM should resist the temptation to engage in the wholesale firing of government personnel affiliated with the former government.

¶19. (C) GOM interlocutors agreed. They underscored that fighting corruption was, along with economic growth, one of the two main pillars of the government's agenda. Slaveski agreed that the fight against corruption had to be non-partisan, but warned that the GOM likely would uncover cases of corruption by DUI members of the former government,

and that such cases could not be ignored. Deputy PM Konevska-Trajkovska said that progress in fighting corruption was also part of the criteria for the EU's evaluation of Macedonia. The GOM was in the process of developing a government anti-corruption action plan, she noted. Selmani said the GOM would implement improved management and administrative procedures to reduce corruption, and would expand the use of information technology within the government to enhance administrative oversight and public transparency of government operations. Selmani also said that only GOM employees on temporary contracts had been let go.

¶10. (C) Amb. Dimitrov said there was some concern in GOM circles that the Greek parliament might, as the government in Athens had warned, refuse to ratify Macedonia's eventual membership in NATO and the EU unless the name issue was resolved. Dimitrov pointed out that the 1995 Interim Agreement prevented the Greek government from vetoing Macedonia's membership in either organization, provided the country entered under the "reference" (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). If it did veto on those grounds, however, Macedonia then would have the right to cease further negotiations on the name, Dimitrov said.

¶11. (U) EUR/SCE Director Hoh cleared this cable.  
MILOVANOVIC